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# VARIORUM.

## The New Opera House in Paris.

The new great opera house of Paris, or to use its official designation, Academy of Music, from which some specimens of decorative ornament have been given in this and two previous numbers of the Workshop will, when fully completed, be one of the most gorgeous and perhaps most appropriate buildings of its kind. The ornamental portions are not yet entirely finished, but the work presents an interesting example of the kind of decorative architecture now in vogue. The main façade of the building looking upon the Boulevards is approached by a flight of steps extending along its entire length and presents seven bays, two of which, forming slightly advanced wings, flank the centre on either side. These bays are marked in the ground floor by semi-circular arcades, decorated with statues and festoons, the principal floor being relieved by a loggia or colonnade of grouped columns supporting a complete entablature of architrave, frieze and cornice, the two projecting wings surmounted by curved pediments. This colonnade is partly masked by a sort of marble screen of great richness, pierced by circular openings, the obscure ground of which is relieved by gilt busts, each compartment being supported by two monolithic columns with shafts of colored marble and gilt bronze capitals. Balconies project between every two of these columns, and contrast with the cream-colored stone by elegantly shaped balusters in green Swedish marble. Above this loggia, but further behind rises an attic story, richly ornamented with groups of figures, the spaces between filled with panels in bold relief, principally formed of boys holding festoons and crowned shields of colored marble, bearing the gilded letter N. This façade has an inscription in the centre of the frieze of the colonnade which describes it as the *„Académie Impériale de Musique“*; the roof is of pavilion-like construction, while the raised part, covered by a huge pediment standing up above all the roofs of the building, marks the space occupied by the theatre. At the point of junction where the *„Académie“* abuts upon the theatre, there is on both sides a pavilion two stories high, with spacious and handsome circular carriage drives, one for the public, one for the Emperor and Empress. The main lines of the building, and the architecture both of front and side porticoes, are capped with bronze ornaments, (see Workshop Nos. 1 and 2) that which crowns the parapet of the main façade being gilt. The outline of the parapet of the front of the edifice is straight, but the two ends are to be surmounted by bronze groups. This new monument which has given rise to much criticism and controversy is the work of M. Ch. Garnier, architect.

## Removal of Paint from Carvings.

Carvings frequently thickly covered with paint cannot be scoured and washed in the ordinary way. In order to remove the paint, it must be eaten off; and for that purpose a trough is required large enough to hold the carving, and to admit of its being covered over with sawdust, saturated with an alkaline solution of a strength varying according to the circumstances of the carving to be treated. By allowing it to remain in that state for a few days the whole of the paint will be eaten off.

The restoration of carvings which have not been painted, but have become blackened, must be effected by scouring only, but this by the careful hand of an experienced man. The scouring with strong or weak alkali or ammonia would raise the grain of the wood, nor could it be sand-papered over to get the raised grain of the wood off: but a number of little tools would be required with the ends dipped into a little glue to which powdered glass would affix itself and form a kind of sand-paper at the end of the stick. In this way the burrs formed upon the wood by moisture may be removed from the delicate parts of the carving: but this likewise requires an experienced hand.

## The Use of Majolica for Interior Decoration.

Visitors to the Paris Exhibition may have remarked, at the end of one of the passages in the British section, a large yellow majolica column, with white relief ornament upon the surface. The ceiling of the new refreshment rooms, recently opened at the South Kensington Museum, London, is supported by four of these columns, which are worthy of careful inspection. They have been manufactured by Messrs. Minton, from designs by Messrs. Gamble and Townroe, founded on suggestions of the late Mr. Godfrey Sykes. The introduction of porcelain for the enrichment of the ornamental portions of columns is not an entire novelty; but a complete porcelain column is believed to be without precedent. It is intended that the walls of the refreshment room shall be covered with majolica tiles, with a low relief ornament on them. A small staircase at the west end of the refreshment corridor has lately been opened, the designs are by Mr. F. Moody, and the works are still in progress. The portions of the decoration already completed and fixed, promise to render this staircase an attractive feature of the museum. The staircase is what is called a barrel-vaulted one; its sides are panelled and decorated with enamelled earthenware by Messrs. Minton, in imitation of the Della Robbia ware. The dado, or skirting, is exceedingly rich in design. At intervals of three steps, caryatids support a cornice, from which it is evident that a handrail will project; the spaces between the caryatids are filled with panels in bold relief on a celadon ground. Between the dado and the cornice above are panels also in glazed pottery with bas-reliefs of figures holding shields; the design of these bas-reliefs is peculiar, and of a varied character. At the top and bottom of each flight are pilasters, which support the arches against which the barrel vault butts. The spaces in the domes over the landings are at present incomplete. The propriety of using glazed pottery for the sides of a public staircase is apparent. The facility of cleaning the surface of the decoration, and the durability of the pottery, are both facts recommending the judgement displayed by the management of the museum in its selection of good, decorative and lasting material. Messrs. Minton have, perhaps, hardly reproduced the effect of the old Della Robbia ware inasmuch as their glazing rather softens the lines of the details instead of leaving them sharp as the artist intended. The old Della Robbia glazing was so exceedingly thin that it did not obliterate the sharpness and crispness of the modelling. Again, the glitter of Messrs. Minton's enamel is distracting, and it does not seem so opaque as the ancient enamel. (Journal of the Society of Arts.)

## Mixture of Gas and Air for Illuminating Purposes.

The Parisian Gas Company propose to illuminate Paris by means of igniting the gas formed by the union of oxygen and hydrogen. Another inventor now comes forward with a scheme for burning a mixture of coal gas and atmospheric air so as to produce an intense light. Every one knows that the ordinary flame of a Bunsen's burner is but faintly luminous. The particles of carbon are so rapidly consumed that their momentary incadescence, which, according to the generally received opinion, gives luminosity to the flame, is not permitted. It is necessary, therefore, to introduce some other substance which shall be maintained at a white heat, and so furnish the light. M. Bourbouse employs for the purpose a roll of very fine platinum wire gauze, upon which he directs a large number of very small jets of the mixed gases. The combustion of these gives a vivid incadescence to the platinum, and furnishes light at a considerably reduced cost. The air, however, has to be supplied by a sort of blow-pipe apparatus, which complicates the matter; but notwithstanding this, the inventor assures us that a great saving is made by the use of his invention.

(The Mechanics' Magazine.)